

Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum

Ewood Park, Monday 7th January 2019 – 6.00pm

Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock
Neil Duckworth

Present from BRFC

Lynsey Talbot
Steve Waggott

John Wareing
Peter Ridehalgh
Savio Mathias
Annette Birkbeck
Jennifer Lewis
Alan Birkbeck
Ray Williamson
Jen Bellamy
Anthony Corry
Mark Hitchen

1. Apologies for absence

Jim Holden
Bharat Parmar
Steve Birtwell
Mike Cheston
Terry Crawford

TS welcomed Peter Ridehalgh to the Fans Forum, nominated by the Rovers Trust.

2. Gordon Ormerod

TS recorded the sorrow of the Forum and the club at the sudden death of Forum member Gordon Ormerod just before Christmas. Gordon had been a member of the Forum since 2008, had been a keen supporter of Rovers teams at all levels for many years and had an active interest in the history of the club.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes dated 12th November 2018

- **Shelving in Jack Walker Upper Stand Concourse**
LT advised the meeting that she expected the shelf in the Jack Walker Upper to be in place in time for the Ipswich game on 19th January.
- **Home Fans Coaches from Darwen**
LT stated that she had checked the situation with the matchday safety team and there did not appear to be much that could be done.

It had been easier at recent games and was noticeably better when the police were controlling the traffic.

c) Kidder St Car Park

LT stated that the club accepted that this car park needed a more thorough resurfacing and it was hoped that this could be scheduled in a future maintenance round.

4. Attendances

TS asked for an update on discussions between the EFL and Sky re the TV availability of games outside Saturday afternoons via the red button. SW replied that the original deal between the EFL and Sky was worth £600 over 5 years. EFL clubs had protested about the extended use of the red button, which they had not been aware would be part of the new deal. As a result Sky had agreed to remove the ability of commercial premises to show games this way, but this had resulted in a reduction of £5m in the overall contract value. EFL clubs remain very concerned about the devaluation of the match day experience that this was causing.

There was some discussion about the £3 surcharge for matchday ticket sales immediately before kick-off. SW stated that one reason for the surcharge was to encourage earlier purchase of matchday tickets and he had been surprised that so many fans had opted to buy tickets before the game with the surcharge – around 40% of matchday tickets on average had been bought with the surcharge.

He stated that there would be no matchday surcharge for the Ipswich game. This was because the two clubs had agreed a pricing structure for both games before the start of the season.

Half day season tickets had now gone off sale. 399 had been sold, making a total of 10,096 season tickets. There would be some 6 and 4 game packages on offer during the remainder of the season and a one-off discounted game.

The cup replay with Newcastle United would be the first game where season ticket holders would be able to have their ticket loaded on to their season ticket card. This was available with the new ticketing system and would save time and cost for the ticket office.

5. Contactless Payments

JL asked how the launch of contactless payments had gone in December. SW replied that whilst there had been some challenges on the back end of the system it had gone extremely well at the front end for fans. There was some discussion about how fans could be encouraged to use contactless more to speed up sales for everyone. It was agreed that having card only payment lines could be a useful addition.

6. Away Fans in Darwen End

ND raised the policy of putting away fans in the top tier of the Darwen End when smaller numbers were expected. He felt that atmosphere in the stadium was affected when there were no away fans in the lower tier. SW stated that the aim of the switch to using the upper tier was to reduce the positive effect of away fans on their team. There could also be issues of extra stewarding and police costs with the interaction between away and home fans. The policy remained under review.

7. Sale of Away Tickets

JW stated that a fan had raised the issue of children at away games being often unable to see games as everyone stood up routinely. Would it be possible to sell tickets such that those with children could buy tickets at the front?

LT responded that the club were restricted by the instructions of the home club as to which blocks of tickets to sell and in what order. It may be possible to sell tickets at the front of these blocks if they were available and she suggested that anyone particularly interested should ask at the time of booking. There would also be the issue that many clubs told fans to sit where they liked on arrival, having sold specific seats.

8. January Transfer Window / Team Matters

Asked what plans Tony Mowbray and the club had for the January transfer window, SW stated that the club still had some budget left over for moves and they were working on a target list. However, any deal would have to fit with the club's long term plans.

9. Any Other Business

- JL raised the issue of the possibility of creating a raised platform at Ewood for disabled supporters. SW suggested that the Disabled Supporters' Club arrange a meeting on the subject of disabled supporter facilities and he would be happy to attend.
- JL stated that the emergency cords in the accessible toilets were often tied up – LT agreed to check them.
- ND asked why the facility to be told where your call was in the queue when calling the ticket office was no longer available. LT stated that this facility had been cancelled when the club were relegated to League 1 but she agreed to revisit this decision.
- SW stated that he had been asked about the grave of John Lewis at the last Supporter Consultation Meeting. He had been to see the grave

and had undertook to tidy up the site and hold a Thanksgiving Service in the future.

- SW stated that the women's team continued to have an excellent season and he hoped that a home game would be played at Ewood Park before the end of the season.
- PR raised the issue of a possible museum or heritage project at Ewood Park. SW noted that John Murray, the Chair of the Rovers Trust had a planned meeting with him on Friday 11th January.
- TS asked about the structural safety of the stadium. SW replied that the structure was checked annually for the stadium safety certificate and that the club was putting together a 10 year plan for stadium maintenance.
- MH noted that he had been impressed by the half blue half white goal netting at an Academy game and wondered if this could be done at Ewood. SW replied that he would need to check if there would be any issues with the goal line technology system but would consider it.

10. Dates of Next Meetings

| Pre -meet | Main meeting |
|-----------|--------------|
| 11/3/19 | 18/3/19 |
| 13/5/19 | 20/5/19 |
| 1/7/19 | 8/7/19 |
| 2/9/19 | 9/9/19 |
| 4/11/19 | 11/11/19 |

All dates are Mondays unless otherwise indicated

Pre-meets are held one week before the main meetings. The pre-meet is open to all interested fans to attend, providing they request to do so in advance by contacting John Wareing by email or phone as below.

Members should contact John Wareing at roversfansforum@hotmail.com or 07984 085474 to give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

Fans can also contact John regarding the Forum using the contact details above.